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Viewing cable 07BAGHDAD440, BARZANI REMAINS STATIC ON PKK ISSUE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07BAGHDAD440	2007-02-09 14:23	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Baghdad

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/karayilan-icin-bilgi-verin.htm>

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VZCZCXRO3295
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0440/01 0401423
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 091423Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9524
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000440

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BARZANI REMAINS STATIC ON PKK ISSUE

REF: BAGHDAD230

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: During the Ambassador's February 3-5 visit to Erbil, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud

Barzani called for a two-part strategy for solving the PKK issue that combines an amnesty with military action. He warned against a purely military action from the Turks and against U.S. unilateral action. He also said that Turkey should not involve itself in Kirkuk. Barzani discussed KRG-Turkey economic ties and said he would send KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani to Ankara on February 17. President Barzani believes now there is an opportunity to transform the PKK from a terrorist to a political organization. END SUMMARY.

Combination of Amnesty and Turkish Military Action

12. (C) KRG President Barzani told the Ambassador a lasting solution will only come from the combination of a Turkish amnesty for returning Kurds and military action that includes support from the KRG against those who refuse the amnesty. Any action without an amnesty will not solve the problem, he told the Ambassador. He said GOI and KRG efforts to ensure the civilian nature of the Makhmour refugee camp should be followed now by Turkey allowing the women and children in the camp to return to Turkey. (Note: Iraqi Minister of State for National Security Waili and KRG Minister of Interior Sinjari have coordinated closely on the closure of the camp. Over the past month, the second division of the Iraqi Army in Ninewah conducted a weapons search (see reftel), data collection for a census, and the establishment of a perimeter to prevent return of PKK. Next steps include a survey of intentions of camp residents and the potential signing of a tripartite agreement on February 28 in Geneva by Iraq, Turkey, and the UNHCR. End note.)

13. (S) He said the Turkish strategy seems to be purely military - no additional option has been put on the table. He predicted that a Turkish ground assault on the PKK would fail, but air strikes might have some effect. He noted that Turkey would have to get U.S. approval for air strikes and, if granted, would negatively affect Kurdish attitudes toward the US. Barzani said the Kurdish leaders of Iraq cannot support a purely military strategy because in the eyes of many Kurds the PKK is fighting for its rights and to go against them would undermine the Kurdish leadership. However, if the PKK continues to fight after an amnesty, then public opinion would permit action against them. He promised to press the PKK to extend the ceasefire and make statements that demonstrate a commitment to a political path.

No U.S. Unilateral Action

14. (S) Barzani said any unilateral U.S. action against the PKK, such as capturing PKK leaders, will only complicate the situation and noted that Ocalan's capture in 1999 did not change the situation. Barzani believes a similar action today by the US could have a negative effect on Kurdish attitudes toward the US and could push the PKK toward cooperation with terrorists such as Al Qaida. U.S. involvement could negatively impact the Kurdish leadership because of the closeness of the Kurds to the US, he continued. He added that any U.S. action would be an opportunity for Iran to engage with the PKK and to undermine Kurdish leadership in the province.

15. (C) He emphasized that the PKK must not be backed into a corner - if the path of constructive resolution is blocked and the US involves itself then the result will be more violence and a broadening of targets. The PKK is entrenched in the mountains and cannot be defeated militarily. He added that one cannot defeat a partisan movement with conventional might, but the PKK wants to cooperate with the US.

Kirkuk

¶6. (C) Barzani said the Kurds will not accept Turkish involvement in the status of Kirkuk. He said the Kurds will have a discussion with the Turkomen and Arabs on the Article 140 steps before and after the process begins, but Turkish involvement would be counterproductive.

Turkish-Kurd Relations

¶7. (C) Barzani said he understands that Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan is facing pressure to act against the PKK and pledged to try to work with the Turkish-Kurdish parties to support Erdogan. He said he is sending KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani to see Turkish Foreign Minister Gul on February 17. During the visit the KRG PM will stress KRG willingness to assist Turkey on the PKK issue. He will also emphasize economic cooperation and relay to the Turks the Kurdish view that Turkey is the most important economic partner for the Iraqi Kurds.

Transformation Opportunity

¶8. (C) Barzani said there is an opportunity to put forward a set of requirements for transforming the PKK from a terrorist to a political organization. He asked what demands the US would have for the PKK and what the PKK would have to accept in order to cease being a terrorist organization.

KHALILZAD